

## POPONENT TESTIMONY

SB 52

Stacy A. Brenneman

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Chairman McColly, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee, my name is Stacy A. Brenneman and I am a resident of Allen County.

I am writing you today about SB 52. As I watched the testimony on the H.B. 6 and what was going to be done about that legislation and the events surrounding that legislation, I was struck by the way the solar lobby answered the questions about where they located solar panels. Most people, when they think of solar, they think over parking lots and on rooftops as responsible places to put solar panels. The use of agricultural land as a “great” place to put solar is only viewed as such by the industry and the lobbyist that gave testimony that day stated that the only reason that agricultural land was used was because it was inexpensive and easy. That struck me as odd that our legislators were not making sure that it was placed where it should be placed, but that they were allowing an industry to do something because it was cheap and easy for them. Especially when so many acres were being used and so many people’s way of life was going to be drastically changed by an industry.

SB 52 would allow local communities the opportunity to decide if they want to be apart of such an “inexpensive and easy” project for the developer. This would allow townships to decide how many acres they would like to set aside or if the industry does not fit within the community. Solar and wind and energy “light” forms of power generation and unlike nuclear, which is very energy dense, are also intermittent. Wind and Solar are also very land intrusive and may not be the best fit for a community. This bill would give the power back to the local community to make that determination for themselves.

Currently the process through the OPSB does not take the wishes of the township into account. Even if the township strongly opposes the project, the OPSB will approve the project, with modifications but the township has no power. The OPSB has a check list and they make sure that check list is completed. The only projects that have not come to fruition, once approved, have had to go to the Ohio Supreme Court. This is an expensive process for the locals. There is a reason that constituents feel that the OPSB does not take their local concerns and even objections into account. If the OPSB had ever denied a project because that township officials had opposed the project, the public would have more faith in that process. But that does not happen since a “need” for the power can always be found (even though we produce 20% more electricity in Ohio than we use). This legislation gives some power back to the townships.

Currently my township is fighting one of these projects. We have a land use plan and zoning concerning solar and wind, but that makes no difference because the OPSB does not have to take those into account. The company basically came in and said to the community as long as they can check all the boxes this project will be approved. It doesn’t matter if it doesn’t fit the plan for the community. There is a portion of the township that this project would be welcome but that company says to our township and community that is not where they want to locate. The agricultural land they have leased is cheaper for them then the industrial zone that is set aside for projects like this. This project does not fit where it is located but it doesn’t matter. The company knows that it may take longer but the project will be approved even though our township trustees are against the location. This project removes approximately 20% of the land in the land use plan set aside for agriculture. It is a 4 square mile industrial project with our local community having little to no impute. And it will change the fabric or our community permanently.

This project is being constructed for Amazon. Seems fair right? Two big wealthy companies changing my community all for profit, while I have to live with the consequences of their actions. Seems to me that Amazon should be required to put the panels over the parking lots like Chase bank has done. Or put the wind power by their distribution centers like Honda or Whirlpool has done. That is responsible use of wind and solar.

This is a land use issue that can overwhelm a township. I am not sure how many townships are affected by the Hardin County projects (Hardin 1 constructed, Hardin 2 beginning construction, Hardin 3 permitting and Hardin 4 and 5 signing up land) but it is ballooning to 5000+ acres and could theoretically encompass whole townships. The local community should have a say and that is what SB 52 allows.

Also, the amount of time these projects are leasing is not for a few years, we are talking 30 to 50 years. That is a long time and a township should have the ability to decide if they are willing to take large areas of land out of potential development for that length of time. The Birch solar project in Lima will take most of the land that could have been used for housing and we are a suburb of Lima. This will stifle any future growth within our township and our trustees should have the final say in such matters, not a group from Columbus that are not members of our community.

Thank you for your time,

Stacy A. Brenneman

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